

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 CLAIM 1. A system for an adaptive sales interview search technique for an
2 electronic catalog, the system comprising:
3 a customer interface;
4 a host system coupled to said customer interface through a network;
5 wherein said host system provides in said electronic catalog products
6 contained in a database, provides in said electronic catalog questions relating to said
7 products to be presented to a customer using said electronic catalog, supplies in said
8 electronic catalog likely answers of the customer linked to constraints relative to said
9 products contained in said database, selects said electronic catalog questions in order of
10 ranked importance, presents a highest ranked question, receives an answer to said highest
11 ranked question, applies said constraints based on said answer to said highest ranked
12 question and limits product choices based on said answer to said highest ranked question;
13 and
14 a database coupled to said host system.

1 CLAIM 2. The system of claim 1, wherein said highest ranked question is presented
2 by a graphics display device.

1 CLAIM 3. The system of claim 1, wherein said highest ranked question is presented
2 by an audio device.

1 CLAIM 4. The system of claim 1, further including:
2 said host system determining a next highest ranked question based on said
3 answer to said highest ranked question;
4 said host system presenting said next highest ranked question;
5 said host system receiving an answer to said next highest ranked question;
6 wherein said host system applies said constraints based on said answer to
7 said highest ranked question and said next highest ranked question; and
8 wherein said host system limits said product choices based on answers to
9 said highest ranked question and said next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 5. The system of claim 4, wherein said host system determining includes said
2 host system searching for said next highest ranked question containing at least one
3 relevant answer.

1 CLAIM 6. The system of claim 5, wherein said host system searching includes said
2 host system presenting said next highest ranked question if said next highest ranked
3 question contains at least two relevant answers.

1 CLAIM 7. The system of claim 1, wherein said host system receiving said answer
2 comprises said host system receiving at least one answer from a plurality of
3 predetermined answers.

1 CLAIM 8. The system of claim 7, wherein each of said plurality of predetermined
2 answers is relevant.

1 CLAIM 9. The system of claim 5, wherein said host system searching includes:
2 said host system determining whether said next highest ranked question
3 contains one relevant answer; and
4 said host system applying said constraints based on said one relevant
5 answer without presenting said next highest ranked question.

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3 CLAIM 10. The system of claim 4, further including:
4 said host system determining a new next highest ranked question based on
5 said answer to said next highest ranked question;
6 said host system iteratively repeating said host system presenting, said host
7 system receiving, said host system applies and said host system determining for said new
8 next highest ranked question until said new next highest ranked question is not relevant;
9 and
10 wherein said host system limits said product choices based on answers to
said highest ranked question, said next highest ranked question and said new next highest
ranked questions.

1 CLAIM 11. The system of claim 10, wherein said host system determining includes
2 said host system searching for said new next highest ranked question containing at least
3 one relevant answer.

1 CLAIM 12. The system of claim 11, wherein said host system searching includes said
2 host system presenting said new next highest ranked question if said new next highest
3 ranked question contains at least two relevant answers.

1 CLAIM 13. The system of claim 11, wherein said host system searching includes:
2 said host system determining whether said new next highest ranked
3 question contains one relevant answer; and
4 said host system applying said constraints based on said one relevant
5 answer without presenting said new next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 14. A method for an adaptive sales interview search technique for an
2 electronic catalog including products contained in a database, questions relating to the
3 products to be presented to a customer using the electronic catalog and likely answers of
4 the customer linked to constraints relative to the products, the method comprising:
5 selectively ranking said electronic catalog questions in order of
6 importance;
7 presenting a highest ranked question;
8 receiving an answer to said highest ranked question;
9 applying said constraints based on said answer to said highest ranked
10 question; and
11 limiting product choices based on said answer to said highest ranked
12 question.

1 CLAIM 15. The method of claim 14, wherein said presenting is by a graphics display
2 device.

1 CLAIM 16. The method of claim 14, wherein said presenting is by an audio device.

1 CLAIM 17. The method of claim 14, wherein said receiving said answer comprises
2 receiving at least one answer from a plurality of predetermined answers.

1 CLAIM 18. The method of claim 17, wherein each of said plurality of predetermined
2 answers is relevant.

1 CLAIM 19. The method of claim 14, further including:
2 determining a next highest ranked question based on said answer to said
3 highest ranked question;
4 presenting said next highest ranked question;
5 receiving an answer to said next highest ranked question;
6 wherein said applying said constraints is based on said answer to said
7 highest ranked question and said next highest ranked question; and
8 wherein said limiting product choices is based on answers to said highest
9 ranked question and said next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 20. The method of claim 19, wherein said determining includes searching for
2 said next highest ranked question containing at least one relevant answer.

1 CLAIM 21. The method of claim 20, wherein said searching includes presenting said
2 next highest ranked question if said next highest ranked question contains at least two
3 relevant answers.

1 CLAIM 22. The method of claim 20, wherein said searching includes:
2 determining whether said next highest ranked question contains one
3 relevant answer; and
4 applying said constraints based on said one relevant answer without
5 presenting said next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 23. The method of claim 19, further including:
2 determining a new next highest ranked question based on said answer to
3 said next highest ranked question;
4 iteratively repeating said presenting, said receiving, said applying and said
5 determining for said new next highest ranked question until said new next highest ranked
6 question is not relevant; and
7 wherein said limiting product choices is based on answers to said highest
8 ranked question, said next highest ranked question and said new next highest ranked
9 questions.

1 CLAIM 24. The method of claim 23, wherein said determining includes searching for
2 said new next highest ranked question containing at least one relevant answer.

1 CLAIM 25. The method of claim 24, wherein said searching includes presenting said
2 new
3 next highest ranked question if said new next highest ranked question contains at least
4 two relevant answers.

1 CLAIM 26. The method of claim 24, wherein said searching includes:
2 determining whether said new next highest ranked question contains one
3 relevant answer; and
4 applying said constraints based on said one relevant answer without
5 presenting said new next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 27. A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program
2 code for an adaptive sales interview search technique for an electronic catalog including
3 products contained in a database, questions relating to the products to be presented to a
4 customer using the electronic catalog and likely answers of the customer linked to
5 constraints relative to the products, said storage medium including instructions for
6 causing a processor to implement a method comprising:

7 selectively ranking said electronic catalog questions in order of
8 importance;
9 presenting a highest ranked question;
10 receiving an answer to said highest ranked question;
11 applying said constraints based on said answer to said highest ranked
12 question; and
13 limiting product choices based on said answer to said highest ranked
14 question.

1 CLAIM 28. The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said presenting is by a graphics
2 display device.

1 CLAIM 29. The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said presenting is by an audio
2 device.

1 CLAIM 30. The storage medium of claim 27, wherein said receiving said answer
2 comprises receiving at least one answer from a plurality of predetermined answers.

1 CLAIM 31. The storage medium of claim 30, wherein each of said plurality of
2 predetermined answers is relevant.

1 CLAIM 32. The storage medium of claim 27, further including instructions for causing
2 said processor to implement:
3 determining a next highest ranked question based on said answer to said
4 highest ranked question;
5 presenting said next highest ranked question;
6 receiving an answer to said next highest ranked question;
7 wherein said applying said constraints is based on said answer to said
8 highest ranked question and said next highest ranked question; and
9 wherein said limiting product choices is based on answers to said highest
10 ranked question and said next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 33. The storage medium of claim 32, wherein said determining includes
2 instructions for causing said processor to implement searching for said next highest
3 ranked question containing at least one relevant answer.

1 CLAIM 34. The storage medium of claim 33, wherein said searching includes
2 instructions for causing said processor to implement presenting said next highest ranked
3 question if said next highest ranked question contains at least two relevant answers.

1 CLAIM 35. The storage medium of claim 33, wherein said searching includes
2 instructions for causing said processor to implement:
3 determining whether said next highest ranked question contains one
4 relevant answer; and
5 applying said constraints based on said one relevant answer without
6 presenting said next highest ranked question.

1 CLAIM 36. The storage medium of claim 32, further including instructions for causing
2 said processor to implement:
3 determining a new next highest ranked question based on said answer to
4 said next highest ranked question;
5 iteratively repeating said presenting, said receiving, said applying and said
6 determining for said new next highest ranked question until said new next highest ranked
7 question is not relevant; and
8 wherein said limiting product choices is based on answers to said highest
9 ranked question, said next highest ranked question and said new next highest ranked
10 questions.

1 CLAIM 37. The storage medium of claim 36, wherein said determining includes
2 instructions for causing said processor to implement searching for said new next highest
3 ranked question containing at least one relevant answer.

1 CLAIM 38. The storage medium of claim 37, wherein said searching includes
2 instructions for causing said processor to implement presenting said new next highest
3 ranked question if said new next highest ranked question contains at least two relevant
4 answers.

1 CLAIM 39. The storage medium of claim 37, wherein said searching includes
2 instructions for causing said processor to implement:
3 determining whether said new next highest ranked question contains one
4 relevant answer; and
5 applying said constraints based on said one relevant answer without
6 presenting said new next highest ranked question.